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REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL ON THE SITUATION IN TAJIKISTAN

(23 March-7 June 1996)

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to paragraph 4 of Security Council resolution 1030 (1995), of 14 December 1995, in which the Council requested me to report to it every three months on the progress towards a comprehensive political settlement of the conflict and on the operations of the United Nations Mission of Observers in Tajikistan (UNMOT). It provides an account of these activities since my last report of 22 March 1996 (S/1996/212).

II. MAINTENANCE OF THE CEASE-FIRE

2. The situation in Tajikistan has been very tense. The most serious developments were in the Tavildara sector. During March and April 1996, the fighting in that area was largely static, marked by exchanges of fire at a distance. The Government used this period to reinforce its troops, using the route from Kulyab through Khovaling to Tavildara. At the end of March, the Khovaling route became almost impassable for military purposes because of weather and road conditions and supplies had to be brought in by helicopter. During the entire period, the Government imposed severe restrictions on the Mission's movements. UNMOT was also unable to observe the activities of the opposition on its side of the confrontation line.

3. Fighting escalated at the beginning of May 1996. On 9 May, the opposition launched a ground offensive, which quickly achieved three objectives: the occupation of Khur, which dominates access to the Obikhingou Valley; the destruction of the Government's forward headquarters near Sayod; and control over the road to the Khoburobot mountain pass. By the early evening of 11 May, the opposition forces had occupied a ridge 600 metres east of Tavildara and started shelling the town. This created panic among troops and civilians, many of whom had sought refuge in Tavildara. At 2000 hours, the UNMOT team at Tavildara was withdrawn for safety reasons and relocated to Garm.

4. On 12 May, Tavildara fell to the opposition. As a result, the Government lost a considerable number of troops and a large amount of equipment. Many of its servicemen (army, militia and security forces) were casualties or taken prisoner while an unknown number deserted. Significantly, the opposition cut off the road to Khoburobot Pass. This is the only domestic link between Gorniy-Badakshan and the rest of the country and an important supply route during the warm season (although impassable in winter).

5. During the intense fighting around Tavildara, the United Nations repeatedly called upon both the opposition and the Government to cease hostilities. UNMOT also protested the opposition's shelling of Tavildara, which put at risk the lives of innocent civilians. On 21 May, the President of the Security Council issued a statement on behalf of the Council condemning the violation of the Tehran cease-fire agreement (S/1994/1102, annex I) and demanding the immediate cessation of the offensive actions and acts of violence (S/PRST/1996/25).

6. After the fall of Tavildara, the Government continued to reinforce its forces in Garm and Tajikabad and deployed troops along the road from Dushanbe to Garm and Jirgatal. These forces are under constant harassment from opposition fighters.

7. On 14 May, mass protests took place at Khodjent and Ura-Tyube, Leninabad region. These protests followed the killing in March, April and May of several prominent persons from Leninabad. The protesters demanded the removal of civil administrators and law enforcement officials of Kulyabi origin, greater autonomy for the region, better food supplies and more effective measures against crime. In order to defuse the situation, the Government replaced law enforcement officials and appointed persons from Leninabad and Tursunzade to senior government positions in Leninabad region. Although the demonstrations have stopped, the situation at Leninabad has remained tense.

8. On 2 June, government forces started a counter-offensive at Tavildara. At the time of reporting little information on this was available, as UNMOT observers have had no access to the area and neither side has provided details.

9. In the rest of the country the situation was relatively calm, although the Russian border forces reported sporadic attacks by the opposition against border posts in the Moskovskiy district. The opposition took responsibility for some of these attacks. Along the border in Gorniy-Badakshan the situation was also relatively quiet.

III. NEGOTIATING PROCESS

10. The lack of progress in addressing the core political problems during the second phase of the Ashkhabad talks, about which I informed the Council in my previous report, and the subsequent fighting have created a stalemate in the negotiating process. The only promising result of the Ashkhabad talks, namely, the agreement on holding a special session of the Parliament, was not fully implemented since the opposition did not participate on the grounds that the security of its representatives was not assured.

11. From 7 to 20 May 1996, my new Special Representative for Tajikistan, Mr. Gerd Merrem, undertook his first mission to the region, during which he had negotiations with President Emomali Rakhmonov at Dushanbe and opposition leader Mr. Abdullo Nuri at Tehran. He also had consultations with the Foreign Ministers of Kazakstan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, the Russian Federation, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan and with the Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran. My Special Representative reported to me on the results of his mission, particularly that the cease-fire agreement had been extended for another three months until 26 August 1996 without conditions during his talks with the leadership of the two Tajik sides. President Rakhmonov reiterated that his Government would favour the extension of the cease-fire agreement for the entire duration of the inter-Tajik talks. The United Tajik Opposition agreed to extend it for three months and issued a declaration to that effect, signed by Mr. Nuri (see the annex to the present report).

12. In addition to the cease-fire extension, my Special Representative discussed with President Rakhmonov and his senior advisers ways to achieve a comprehensive political solution. President Rakhmonov recognized that the conflict in his country could be resolved only through political dialogue. In this context, he said that the government delegation accepted the United Nations proposals presented during the second phase of the Ashkhabad talks. However, he singled out only one issue, the establishment of a consultative forum of the Tajik peoples, which he said had to be discussed as a priority issue during the resumed inter-Tajik talks.

13. President Rakhmonov promised to provide the necessary security to the opposition members of the Joint Commission, which would enable it to resume its activities after they had been suspended on 5 March 1996 as a result of the abduction of the opposition Co-Chairman of the Commission. He also promised to ensure freedom of movement for UNMOT personnel.

14. On 17 May 1996 I had a meeting with President Rakhmonov in Moscow, where he was attending the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) summit. He reiterated the commitment of his Government to a political solution of th conflict and emphasized the important role played by UNMOT in stabilizing e situation in the country. He expressed the hope that its mandate would be extended and assured me of the security of UNMOT personnel and their freedom of movement.

15. The leader of the Tajik opposition, Mr. Nuri, during his negotiations with my Special Representative in Tehran, stated that there was no military solution to the Tajik conflict and that it should be resolved only through political dialogue. He accordingly suggested that the inter-Tajik negotiations be resumed as soon as possible. As a confidence-building measure, the opposition decided to release, without condition, 26 prisoners captured in the Tavildara area. The release, which was to have taken place on 28 May, has been delayed; the International Committee of the Red Cross is in touch with both sides to arrange it as soon as possible. At the same time, the opposition leaders reiterated their ideas on the establishment of a Council of National Reconciliation as the only solution to the Tajik problem. This proposal of the opposition was described in my previous report.

IV. ACTIVITIES OF THE UNITED NATIONS MISSION OF OBSERVERS IN TAJIKISTAN

A. Joint Commission

16. The Joint Commission did not function during this period because of the absence of the opposition members. Despite repeated assurances, the Government has not yet given written guarantees for their security, which is a condition for their return. Nor has the Government made any announcements concerning its investigation into the fate of Mr. Zafar Rakhmonov, the opposition Co-Chairman of the Joint Commission who was abducted in February 1996, precipitating the departure from Dushanbe of opposition members of the Joint Commission. In the absence of the Joint Commission, UNMOT has carried out a number of investigations of possible cease-fire violations and communicated the results to the parties.

17. During the reporting period, UNMOT activities were severely impeded by restrictions on its movements. The Government generally prevented UNMOT from moving on the Kulyab-Khovaling-Tavildara road and between Moskovskiy and Shuroabad. Government representatives have cited security concerns and bad road conditions as reasons for the restrictions. However, government forces and local civilians use the roads in question freely. This matter was repeatedly raised with the Government at all levels and a new effort to solve it was made after the above-mentioned statement of the President of the Security Council, which included a paragraph on this subject. Nevertheless, the restrictions have continued, despite assurances received at the highest level that they would be lifted.

18. The opposition restricted UNMOT movement on 4 April 1996, when an UNMOT patrol was stopped and not allowed to proceed at the entrance of the Yasgulem Valley at Vanj. On 16 April, an UNMOT patrol and the car of the Ambassador of the United States of America to Tajikistan were stopped while heading north on the Dushanbe-Garm road and searched before being allowed to proceed. UNMOT protested both incidents with the opposition leadership, who accepted responsibility and promised to send instructions to the field commanders to refrain from blocking UNMOT movement.

19. On 4 May 1996, snipers fired at an UNMOT patrol on the Tavildara-Garm road. On 17 May, an UNMOT team on patrol was robbed and detained for more than three hours in an area dominated by the opposition. In both cases the attackers have not been identified. The opposition denied responsibility, citing the existence of numerous armed criminal groups.

B. Liaison

20. UNMOT maintained regular contacts with the Russian border forces and the peace-keeping forces of the Commonwealth of Independent States, both at headquarters level and in the field. It cooperated closely with the mission of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). UNMOT continued to maintain regular contacts and liaison activities with other United Nations

agencies and non-governmental organizations to facilitate the provision of humanitarian assistance.

C. Organizational aspects

21. In addition to serving as my Special Representative for Tajikistan, based in Dushanbe, Mr. Merrem has also assumed the function of Head of Mission of UNMOT, replacing Mr. Darko Silovic. At the beginning of June 1996, UNMOT had an overall strength of 94, including 44 military observers from Austria (6), Bangladesh (7), Bulgaria (6), Denmark (4), Jordan (6), Poland (2), Switzerland (5), Ukraine (3) and Uruguay (5) and 50 civilian staff, of whom 18 were recruited internationally. Brigadier-General Hasan Abaza (Jordan) continued as Chief Military Observer.

22. In addition to its headquarters in Dushanbe, UNMOT maintained eight teams throughout the country (see the attached map); the post in Tavildara was temporarily vacated on 11 May because of the fighting there. The Government of Afghanistan has reaffirmed its decision to permit the establishment of a post in Taloqan for the purpose of maintaining liaison with the opposition leaders stationed there. It is hoped that actual deployment can be achieved in the near future.

D. Financial aspects

23. By its resolution 49/240 of 31 March 1995, the General Assembly appropriated the amount of $10,044,200 gross for the continued operation of UNMOT for the period from 27 April 1995 to 30 June 1996. This amount is equivalent to $717,400 gross per month. In addition, on 3 June 1996, the Fifth Committee in its draft resolution A/C.5/50/L.48 recommended that the General Assembly appropriate the amount of $7,478,900 gross for the maintenance of the Mission for the period from 1 July 1996 to 30 June 1997, which is equivalent to $623,242 gross per month. Therefore, should the Council decide to extend the mandate of UNMOT for a further period of six months, the cost for maintaining the operation would be approximately $3.8 million gross.

24. As at 21 May 1996, the total of outstanding assessed contributions to the Special Account for UNMOT amounted to $788,296, which represents some 6 per cent of the assessment for the Mission since its inception. The total outstanding assessed contributions for all peace-keeping operations was $1.7 billion.

V. ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL ACTIVITIES OF THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM

25. During the period under review, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the World Food Programme (WFP), the World Health Organization (WHO), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), as well as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, were represented in the country. Although financial constraints did not permit the renewal of the contract of the Special Representative of WHO in Tajikistan, a national liaison office has been set up

to coordinate WHO activities in the country. In early 1996, UNICEF and WFP launched appeals to address the crisis in the food, health and education sectors, and provided assistance in the form of food products, agricultural inputs, clothing, shelter, educational materials, medicines, vaccines, and expert services in various areas. UNHCR continued to provide assistance to the Ministry of Justice in connection with legislation and due process associated with internally displaced persons and refugees.

26. Following on the efforts of UNHCR, UNDP is currently implementing a $20 million multi-sectoral project designed to promote rural reconstruction, rehabilitation and development, for which contributions are being solicited. UNDP is also promoting peace-building and reconciliation activities through a community-based project focusing on youth in the country's most war-ravaged districts. The Executive Board of IMF recently approved a stand-by loan for Tajikistan valued at $22 million, signalling the start of active involvement of international financial institutions in the development process. Other important areas of current and future assistance from the United Nations system are water and sanitation, agriculture, public transport, health care, public administration and governance, aid coordination, small enterprise development and energy.

27. With the formal end of the "complex" emergency at the end of 1995 and the scaling down of the UNHCR presence in Tajikistan, the Department of Humanitarian Affairs' Field Coordination Unit in Dushanbe was disbanded and the United Nations Resident Coordinator/UNDP Resident Representative was designated the official Department of Humanitarian Affairs representative in Tajikistan. However, the emergency situation continues, accompanied by massive unemployment, poverty and starvation, which continue to require the close attention of the international community.

VI. OBSERVATIONS

28. I am very concerned at the serious deterioration of the situation in Tajikistan, which is at its worst and most volatile since the end of the civil war of 1992. Large-scale fighting in the Tavildara region has resulted in many human losses, the interruption of communication between the capital and a large part of the country and a dramatic aggravation of the humanitarian situation of the civilian population. Information I have received from UNMOT indicates that the fighting is continuing. These developments raise serious questions regarding the sincerity and intentions of the Tajik parties.

29. On the other hand, my new Special Representative and Head of Mission in Dushanbe has just begun his activities and, notwithstanding the doubts generated by recent developments, I believe that his efforts should be given time to show results. In this connection, the support provided by interested Governments will be essential. I have also taken note of the conviction expressed by both parties that the conflict in Tajikistan cannot be settled by military means and of their declared willingness to resume the inter-Tajik negotiations as soon as possible. I therefore recommend that the Security Council extend the mandate of UNMOT for a further period of six months. If at the end of that period the

prospects for progress have not improved, I would recommend that the Security Council review the United Nations commitment in this theatre.

30. In the present circumstances, the first priority is the restoration of an effective cease-fire. I appeal to the Tajik parties to cease hostilities immediately and to comply strictly with their obligations under the cease-fire agreement. I have instructed my Special Representative to facilitate the convening of the next round of inter-Tajik talks as soon as possible to discuss modalities for the restoration and enhancement of the cease-fire and additional guarantees for its strict observance.

31. For the last few months, the activities of UNMOT have been impeded by threats to the security of its personnel and by restrictions on the freedom of movement of the military observers. The activities of the Joint Commission have been suspended for more than three months now, because of the lack of adequate security for its opposition members. I call upon both sides to remove these obstacles and to create the conditions necessary for UNMOT to function effectively and for the Joint Commission to resume its activities as soon as possible.

32. Once again, I call upon the Afghan authorities and the United Tajik Opposition to finalize arrangements that would permit the establishment of an additional liaison post at Taloqan.

33. In conclusion, I wish to pay tribute to Mr. Darko Silovic, the outgoing Head of Mission of UNMOT, to Brigadier-General Hasan Abaza, the Chief Military Observer, and to the men and women serving with UNMOT for the manner in which they have carried out their tasks. They have served with distinction under very difficult and often dangerous conditions.

Annex

[Original: Russian]

Declaration by the United Tajik Opposition on Extending the Tehran Agreement on a Temporary Cease-fire and the Cessation of Other Hostile Acts on the Tajik-Afghan Border and within the Country

Taking into account the need to continue the political dialogue aimed at bringing about a speedy settlement of the conflict and achieving national harmony, the United Tajik Opposition is extending the period of validity of the Tehran Agreement for three months, until 26 August 1996.

In so doing, the United Tajik Opposition assumes that the sides are undertaking the obligation not to prevent representatives of the International Committee of the Red Cross and international and human rights organizations, and journalists from visiting the territory under their control.

The Government and the United Tajik Opposition will also unblock roads and ensure the unimpeded movement of civilians and non-military goods.

The United Tajik Opposition has also taken note of the communication by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Gerd Merrem, on the confirmation by the Government of its obligations to provide security guarantees to the members of the Joint Commission from the Opposition, including round-the-clock protection.

In taking this decision on extending the Agreement on a Temporary Cease-fire, the United Tajik Opposition hopes that it will be strictly observed by both sides in a conscientious manner and to the fullest extent.

(Signed) Sayed Abdullo NURI
Leader of the United Tajik Opposition

19 May 1996
Tehran

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